

Bilingual Education: A Demand or A Prestige

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Introduction

The development of modern era has made many differences in people's way of thinking. Modern people are demanded to be ready to face the development in every part of life, including the development of business, science, and also education. All these developments cannot be separated from the influences of western culture. Indonesia, as a developing country, has filtered those influences from other countries in many aspects, including way of thinking. However, one way to get connected with other countries is by using the language as communication tool. As the result, English, known as international language, is used by many people in Indonesia.

The use of English as a mean to communicate internationally has changed people's way of thinking. They believe that mastering English will enable them to communicate in the international world. This results a change in the way to raise and educate children. People nowadays believe that by introducing English in early ages is substantial for their children to acquire the ability to speak English, so that they can get along well later on in the international community.

As stated above, the idea is that introducing English to children in early ages is considered very important to give a solid foundation for children to speak English well, so that they can get along well later on in international community. This, in turn, makes many parents use more than one language to communicate with their children. Besides their mother language, they are also being introduced with English that in turn become the second language of their children. By doing this, they believe that the children will have the opportunity to internalize the mental processes that occur on the social level, just like Verhoeven (1991) said that the task of the adult is maximizing the growth of the intra psychological functioning of the child.

The idea of using two languages in communicating with their children that, in other word, raising bilingual children certainly have its advantages in today's global

society. Yet bilingualism really isn't something that simply happens. Raising children to be successful in more than one language requires some careful planning and understanding about the development of bilingualism.

Even the word "bilingualism" has different meanings for different families. Some families, having the ability to listen in two languages but speak in just one may constitute bilingualism, while other parents expect their kids not only to be bilingual in terms of auditorial or spoken, but also become literate in both languages. Whatever the goals for developing bilingualism in each family may be, success appears to depend on whether a "language plan" has been worked out in advance. Families who take time to consider how their kids will develop two languages, and who make the necessary commitments to bilingual language development, tend to be more successful in raising bilingual children.

In order to raise bilingual children, parents also pay an attention to their children education. As using two languages are started in the children environment, parents, as the persons in charge of the children development, must initiate it. School as the place for children to explore their knowledge and socialize also plays an important role. A proper school with good curriculum will give significant influence to the future of their children's.

In modern family, choosing a school which uses two languages for communication is considered as a must. Nevertheless, there are also many parents who are not bothered with the language used in a school. They believe that a language can be learned later when the children grow up. The parents who care for the language used will choose a bilingual school for their children. They have an opinion that more language means more access to knowledge for their children. They also believe that students who are bilingual will be more creative and divergent, as stated by Hudson, quoted by Verhoeven (1991), that bilingual students have shown an increase in cognitive advantages, such as being more divergent and creative in thinking.

Based on the fact that there are many parents who favor bilingual school and those who are not, the writer wanted to investigate parents' opinion about bilingual education.

Further about Bilingualism

The idea of introducing children with two languages at early ages has been supported in many ways by researchers. Marsha Rosenberg, in her research paper “Raising Bilingual Children” (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Rosenberg-Bilingual.html>) said that there are two types of childhood bilingualism. The first is simultaneous learning of two languages. This type is affected by four key factors:

- The parents' ability in one or more languages. Some parents speak only one language, the language of the home, and are unable to speak the language of the school and possibly of the community.
- The parents' actual use of language with the child. The parents may have language ability in two or more languages but have made a decision about which language they speak with the child.
- The language or languages other family members speak with the child, such as the language spoken between siblings or between children and grandparents.
- The last factor is the language the child uses in the community.

The second type of childhood bilingualism is called sequential or successive bilingualism. This happens when a child has one established language before learning a second language, whether in preschool or later (the age of three usually separates simultaneous and sequential language learning). Some kids and adults, of course, usually learn a second language formally through school or language classes.

Garcia said that there are two kinds of bilingual education. The first is called additive bilingualism, in which the mother language is used and the second language is added. The second one is called subtractive bilingualism, where the students are instructed in both their mother tongue and a second language. The instruction in the mother tongue ceases, with the second language becoming the sole medium of instruction and ultimately the only language of the student, as said by Lambert (Coulmas, 1980). Educational programs that support additive bilingualism are referred to as *strong*, whereas those which engaged in subtractive bilingualism are referred to as *weak* (Baker, 1993).

Statement of Purpose

This study investigated parents' opinion about bilingual education for their children. In other words, the reasons of choosing the bilingual or monolingual school are being analyzed.

Research Questions

1. Why do you choose bilingual school for your children?
2. What do you hope from your children in bilingual school?

Research Method

Subjects

The subjects are parents who have 2 to 5 years old children living in a neighborhood. Among the parents, there are some parents whose children are in bilingual schools and those with children in monolingual school. The subject of this study consists of ten people, 5 female and 5 male. These ten people are expected to represent number of parents who support or unsupported the bilingual education.

Data Collection

Data were collected in two steps, interview and questionnaire. The interview was carried out in the form of open-ended question. The result of the interview is recorded and it is noted. Besides, the parents are also given a list of questions that must be answered. The interview and the questionnaire are used to find out the parents' comment and idea toward bilingual education for their young children.

Results

After giving the list of questions in interview and from the questionnaire given it can be said that among parents, there are many consideration of why they choose bilingual school for their young children.

The results of the interview and questionnaire can be seen as follow:

Name	Child's Name	Age	School	Reasons of choosing the school
Maria	Tasya	3,5	Alpha Zona	It use English and full of

Josephine				activity
Yunita	Ezra	4	Mentari Kasih	Good system and not far from home
Tri Yulistyawati	Gilang	4	TK Permai Manyar Kartika	Using good Psychological Approach
Agustine Lilawati		3,5	Creative School	Close to my house and English is used by teacher in giving instruction
Tantri	Ian Rizki Gusti	4	TK Pertiwi	Good school
Claudia Natalia	Martha Alicia	3	Little School House	It uses English as communication media

From the questionnaire given, it can be seen that the reasons of choosing the school for their children is variant, some of them (50 %) choose bilingual school because and some of them, about 50 % choose monolingual school because they emphasize on the emotional education than in language competence.

Conclusion

The idea of educating bilingual children is both appealing and possible for more and more families these days, and growing up with more than one language certainly has its advantages in today's global village. Educating kids to be successful in more than one language requires some careful planning and learning about bilingual language development.

The reasons for choosing to educate kids with two or more languages are as varied as the families themselves. Even the word "bilingualism" has different meanings for different families. For some families, having the ability to listen in two languages but speak in just one may constitute bilingualism, while other parents expect their kids not only to be bilingual, but also literate in both languages. Whatever the goals for developing bilingualism in each family may be, success appears to depend on whether a "language plan" has been worked out in advance. Families who take the time to consider how their kids will develop two languages, and who make the necessary commitments to bilingual language development, tend to be more successful in raising bilingual children.